

THE  
**Last Sermon**  
OF

Mr. *Joseph Stephens*,

Late LECTURER of St. Giles's  
*Cripplegate, St. Margaret's Loth-*  
*bury, and St. Michael's Woodstreet.*

Together with

- I. A Sermon Compos'd by him a little before his Death, (but never Preach'd, being prevented by his Last Sicknefs.)
- II. A Sermon concerning *The Hopes of the Righteous at Death.*
- III. A Sermon on *Jam. IV. Verse 17th; Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin.*

Lately Preach'd at the said Lectures. All Publish'd from his own Manuscript Copies, fairly Written out for the Press by himself.

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L O N D O N :

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TO the HEARERS of  
Mr. *Joseph Stephens*, Late  
LECTURER at  
St. *Giles's Cripplegate*,  
St. *Margaret's Loth-*  
*bury* and St. *Michael's*  
*Woodstreet.*

THE following Sermons  
having the Late Reverend  
Mr. Stephens for their Au-  
thor, need not an Epistle to recommend  
them: To You especially, it is needless,  
who are so well acquainted with his  
Worth, and who at this time labour  
under the heavy sense of your great  
loss of him. And indeed in the Age  
we live in, a Minister, who is in-  
defatigable in his Endeavours after

the spiritual good of his Flock, ought not to be parted with without a Concern as singular as his Example is rare. And I am sure the Subject of your sorrow will justify the Degree of it; for such an one was Mr. Stephens; One who had an unsatiable Love for the Souls of Men, and for yours in particular; a Love which lasts longer than his Life; for when he had spent that in your Service, and the time was come that he must Depart hence, and be your Lecturer no more: He did (by ordering his Works to be Printed) as it were, Multiply himself among you; for whereas before you had him only teaching you from the Pulpit, you may now every one [of you] have him home with you, Instructing you in your Closets at all Times,  
and

and upon all Occasions ; so that although his Labour upon Earth be ceas'd , yet he seems to be still teaching you from Heaven, and shewing you the steps by which he went thither.

'Twas observed , that when he preach'd this his Last Sermon , he urg'd it with a more than ordinary Warmth , as if he had known it to be the last he should utter ; for which reason it is publish'd first ( before his other Excellent Discourses and Sermons ) that so if he had any peculiar drift in the Choice of the Subject , or the home Application of it with respect to that Circumstance of Time ( which I am apt to think he had ) we might further his intentions, and leave the Effect to Providence. Herewith is also Publish'd another Sermon which he compos'd a little before he Dyed, ( but

( but never Preach'd, being disabled  
by his last Sickneß. ) Together with  
his Discourse concerning the Hopes  
of the Righteous at Death : And  
another on Jam. 4. 17th Verse ;  
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do good, and doth it not, to him  
it is Sin. All which, for the Rela-  
tion they bear to each other , and the  
Importance and Seasonableness of  
their Doctrine, were thought fit to be  
printed together.

And to Conclude ; May you so  
Regulate your Lives by the Rules he  
gave you ( as it is also the Doctrine  
of Christ ) that neither these, nor any  
other of his Works hereafter to be  
Publish'd , may Rise up as Witnesses  
against you at the last Day , is the  
Prayer of

Your Friend and Servant,

J O B XXVII. 5, 6.

*Will I die, I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.*

**T**H E S E words were spoken by *Job*, who here makes a solemn Resolution to maintain an unprejudiced Mind, and an innocent Conscience; to behave himself prudently, and not to be guilty of that thing wittingly, or by choice, which should either shame him to reflect upon, or slur his Reputation, were it exposed to human knowledge. It was in the midst of  
B Adversity

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Adversity, and depth of Disgrace; when he thus covenanted with himself; when his Wealth and Store were taken from him, his Children spirited away, and his Servants despised, and his Friends stood at a distance from him; when he was tormented with Pains and Sores, and had not where to lay his Head. In the midst of such an unhappy change of things it was, that this good Man peremptorily resolved to keep a Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards Man. *As God liveth, says he, Verse 2. who hath taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul: All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils; My lips shall not speak of wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit.* Though it were my Lot, and God's determinate Will, that I be thus severely dealt with all my Days; yet it shall be my care and study to behave my self wisely in a perfect way;

way; neither to murmur under such Dispensations, or do that thing which may stain my Integrity, or expose me to humane Censure. *Till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.* A well-disciplin'd Christian's care is, to carry such a temper of Mind with him out of this World, which may enhance his Happiness, and improve his Felicity in the next. Therefore it is, that he Debates and Argues, Examines and Judges before he be tempted by Interest or Example. Neither the prospect of Wealth or Honour, or any worldly Advancement, shall induce him to a low-spirited Action, or put him upon unjust Ways. He submits to the Government of Providence, and does not seem to hasten a change of things by immoderate Wishes and Desires. In fine, in the whole Course of his Actions he pre-

fers a well-pleased Conscience; and will rather forego all External Goods, than forfeit that which will be a continual comfort to him, though in the depth of Disgrace, and worldly Debasement. For what outward Evils can, in a sense, disturb that Man, who is perpetually followed with a harmless Mind, which always resounds to him those best and sweetest Ecchoes, *Well done good and faithful servant*; how bravely dost thou acquit thy self; how manfully dost thou resist Temptations; what care dost thou take in the management of thy Affairs; how little art thou influenced by Interest and Example; how courageously dost thou bear up against the Flatteries of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil? *O, well is thee, and happy shalt thou be. This, says the Wiseman, is a continual feast*; and will bear a Man up under all the uncertainties, disappointments, conflicts, and miseries of this Life. He need  
not

not resort to Drink or Company to replenish his Mind, and relax his Thoughts, who is thus caressed and crowned with the pleasing Ecchoes of an unprejudic'd Spirit. This was Holy *Job's* Consolation during his Exilement from Prosperity, while his Flesh groaned under a sad Catastrophe, and dismal Change of Things. Upon a review of his Life past, he discovered that he had walked uprightly with God; that amidst all the Temptations which Wealth and Fortune could caress him with, he had a special regard to the thing that was just; and though Providence was pleased to alter his Condition, and strip him of all External Goods, yet this was his Comfort, *My righteousness I hold fast, I have hitherto retained my integrity, and am resolved, through the Assistance of Divine Grace, that my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.* Now my design from these words, is,

*First* of all, To shew the Necessity of Holy Resolution, wherewith *Job* fortifies himself against the very worst that may happen to him, *Till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me*; and so on.

*Secondly*, To shew how far Holy Resolution is virtuous, and in what sense it turns to a good account.

*Thirdly*, To lay down some Motives to resolve well and timely. And then conclude.

*First* then, I am to shew the Necessity of (Holy Resolution) wherewith *Job* fortifies himself against the very worst that may happen to him, saying, in the Text, *Till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me*. We all well know by experience, that we are naturally depraved by the Presumption and Fall of our first Parents; our Inclinations are vile and propense to Evil, our Wills stubborn  
and

and irregular, our Passions violent and  
 mutinous. In fine, in us, that is, in  
 our Flesh, dwelleth no good thing at  
 all. What Motions to Evil do we  
 ever and anon perceive stirred up  
 within us? How greedy are our Ap-  
 petites of the forbidden Fruit? What  
 abundance of unbecoming Thoughts  
 invade our Minds, and envelop our  
 Spirits in Hurry and Confusion? How  
 naturally averse are we from Holy  
 Things? How disagreeable is Duty  
 to our Affections? In a word, how  
 unsuitable is the knowledge of God  
 and another World to us in our Natu-  
 ral State? When a Good presents it  
 self, and uses forcible Arguments to  
 court our Acceptance, how apt are  
 we to boggle and protract, to make  
 excuses, or to give a flat denial? Nay,  
 so unhappy are we, that interpreta-  
 tively we take more pains to damn,  
 than to save our selves. For what  
 a deal of our time do we waste in  
 catering for our Lusts? What Difficul-



ties and Hardships do we rub through to gratify our foolish Appetites? How many restless Nights, and broken Sleeps, do we patiently endure, to bring an unmanly project to bear? In fine, what a train of tumultuous Noises will we charge through, to oblige a fond Humour, and answer a whimsical Disposition? This is our Condition by Nature, this our Unhappiness through the Transgression of our First Parents.

But this is not all. As we are thus interrupted by our own corrupt Nature, so we are in as much danger by Temptations from without. The Devil, who is rendred for ever incapable of Repentance, as sinning without a Tempter, envies the hopeful Condition of Man, who is admitted to Sorrow and Pardon through the Merits and Satisfaction of a Saviour; And therefore uses all his Art and Cunning to stain his Innocence, and to bring him into the same miserable



nable Condition with himself. He has Apples to please those of tender, and Gold to enchant those of riper Years; he has Kingdoms to allure the Ambitious, and flattering Arguments to betray the Pretenders to Reason. The Apostle gives this Character of him, *That he goes up and down like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*; and whom he exhorts us to resist stedfast in the Faith. He examines and observes Mens Humours, and then suits his Temptations proportionably. He well knew that *Cain* was Proud, Ambitious, and Self-conceited, and by degrees induced him to imbrue his Hands in the Innocent Blood of his Brother *Abel*. He knew that *Peter* was fearful and pusillanimous, and so tempted him to deny his Master with Oaths and Curses. He knew that *Judas* was selfish and covetous, and therefore prompted him to betray the Holy Jesus for thirty pieces of Silver. He  
is

is a restless Enemy, and purposes to make all he can as miserable as himself. But this is our happiness, though he is admitted to tempt, yet he cannot force us to Sin; he lays the bait, but cannot compel us to swallow it without our consent. He importuned our Blessed Saviour to cast himself down from the Pinnacle of the Temple, but was not impowered to do him the mischief. When we stain our Innocence, and lose our Peace, the blame lies at our own Door; the Adversary is not so much in fault: It is true, he used Arguements, insinuated closely, and left no means unattempted; but it was yet in our choice whether we would hearken to, and be overcome by his Allurements.—— Nor can we lay the blame upon God in suffering us to fall, but upon our selves, for living careless and secure, and giving the Enemy fair opportunities and advantages of committing a Rape upon  
on

on our Integrity. *Let no man, says St. James, say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with Evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and inticed, James I. 13, 14.* Were we but solicitous and thoughtful, aware of the Adversary, sensible of our own weaknesses, and furnished with wise Considerations, we should not be so easily courted to lose our Innocence, nor would Temptations have such Influence upon us. *St. Paul in this Case thus exhorts us, Ephes. 6. 13, 14, &c. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you will be able to quench all*

*all the fiery darts of the devil, and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.* But considering, I say, our natural Depravation, whereby we are strongly propense to Evil, and averse from that which is Good, are liable to the Incurfions of Satan, and in imminent danger of falling as so many Victims to him; what necessity is there of Holy Resolution: that seeing we are set in the midst of so many and great Temptations, we forthwith wisely resolve to use our utmost care and diligence to stem the tide of our evil Inclinations within, and to confront the insinuating Arguments of Temptations without us; *To hold fast our righteousness, and not to let our hearts reproach us so long as we live.* Which leads me in the second place,

Secondly, To shew how far (Holy Resolution) is virtuous, and in what sense

sense it turns to a good account. To be religiously disposed by fits and girds, to load our selves with solemn Vows and Protestations in a melancholly Humour, or when we have taken some disgust at our Sins; but so soon as this Mood is over, and our Passion allayed, we return to our wonted Extravagances, *like the Dog to his vomit*, and the Sow that is washed, *to her wallowing in the mire*: I say, to be thus uncertainly Good, and to resolve peremptorily upon a sudden surreption or surprize, is not an Argument of a virtuous, but of an unconstant and wavering spirit. Many, after a long and tedious fatigue in pursuit of their Sins, have resolved upon amendment; but no sooner a Temptation hath come in their way, which pleased their Humour, but have forgotten what they said, and swallowed the Bait with as much eagerness as ever. Some, on their Sick Beds, have bound themselves

selves under certain Obligations to become new and better Christians, should they be blessed with a recovery of Health and Strength; but so soon as they have been able to relish a pleasing Lust, and comply with a suitable Temptation, have basely degenerated from their late Promise, and sold their Innocence for a trifle.

—True indeed, it is a kind of Virtue to resolve well, to vow amendment of Life, to be serious and thoughtful sometimes; but it is much more virtuous to pass into Action, and express our sincerity by an absolute and thorough Conversion: And unless Holy Promises terminate into Pious Practices, they will be so far from contributing to our happiness, that they will appear as so many instances of our Folly, and induce a crimson Guilt. How many Spirits are there wandering to and fro in the infernal Shades, who, while they were in this Life, made repeated Pro-  
testations



testations to change their Minds and Manners; and because they did protract and linger, and took no care to pay that which they had vowed, are repenting of their Negligences, and must live out a long Eternity in unpitied Sighs and Groans. It is the easiest part of Religion to make fair Promises; and did it consist in nothing else, there are but few who would boggle at it: For it is no great difficulty now and then to be seriously disposed; and during the Mood, to protest a Reformation hereafter. That which evidences our Piety, is the mortifying our Lusts and Passions, subduing our Wills, and bringing the Flesh in subjection to the Spirit: And without this piece of Religion, all external Pretences are of no significance. If thou vowest to God, thou dost well; and if thou makest it good, thou dost better; for he has no pleasure in the Sacrifice of Fools. — He dates our Conversion from  
that



that time we have slain our Lusts, changed our Minds, subdued our Appetites, and are reduced to the evennesses of Virtue and a good Nature. Resolution without practice, is only an argument of a hasty Spirit, of a rash and injudicious Mind, that considers not what he says, as well as intends not what he solemnly promises. But to be more concise:

He that resolves well, and does not perform, is a Sinner in the highest degree, because he condemns that Course of Life he continues in; or otherwise, why did he vow to forsake it? And let me add, There is less hopes of that Man's Conversion who threatneth it by promises, but yet protracts and lingers, than of his who never made any; because it plainly argues that his Conscience is seared, who, notwithstanding all the Appeals he has made unto God, and the Resolution he has confirmed of becoming better, he still continues in his

Original

Original State, as Vicious, as Sensual  
as ever. For were he truly affected  
with a sense of his Condition, were  
he struck with a thorough Compun-  
ction for Sin, his Resoulution would  
quicken and spur him on to deny all  
Ungodliness and worldly Lust, to live  
soberly and righteously. Therefore  
to sum up this Head: Holy Resolu-  
tion is of no force and validity, di-  
stinct and separate by it self; it car-  
ries in it nothing of true Religion  
unless it pass into Action, and oblige  
a Man to enter upon strict Discipline,  
to mortify his Passions and Lusts,  
and to proceed in all Virtue and  
Godliness of Living. And he that  
reckons himself in a happy Condi-  
tion, because he now and then, in a  
melancholly pensive Mood, promises  
to become a new Creature, is mise-  
rably deceived, and will in the end  
sorrowfully find, *That without holi-  
ness no man shall see the Lord.* For  
when by the mighty Sound of the  
C last

last Trump we shall be awakened, and summoned to the dread Tribunal of Christ, it will be of no use to us, that we many times resolved to do well; then we shall stand or fall by our Actions; according to that saying of the Apostle, *We shall all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to give an account for what we have done in the flesh, and to receive according to that we have done, whether it be good or bad.* And thus much may suffice for the Second thing, which was to shew how far (Holy Resolution) is virtuous, and in what sense it turns to a good Account, with relation to that of Job's in the Text, saying, *Till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.* I pass on now in the third place,

*Thirdly,*

*Thirdly*, To lay down some Motives to excite you to resolve well and timely. And here, *First*, consider how difficult it is to change a mind that is naturally depraved, and to bring an originally corrupted Constitution into a good Frame and Order. For besides that Sin is innate, born in us, so it has been springing up, and growing in our Nature ever since our Birth, that it is become head-strong and tumultuous, and requires much Pains and Care, Courage, Resolution, and Patience, Watchings and Strivings, Prayers and Tears to root it out. Sin is not soon mastered; for as it has taken time to gather together, so it must be the Work of much time to loosen it from its strong holds, and to banish it from thence, where it has so long continued. Faint Veileries and Pusillanimity will never accomplish this great Concernment; nor is that Resolution immediately

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formed;

formed, which can go on with such a painful undertaking. For if there be any leak left open in our Resolution for any Sin to creep in at, that will be sure to insinuate in the next Storm of Temptation; and if it should not let in other Sins after it, as it is a thousand to one but it will, it will by its own single weight sink us into Eternal Perdition. Wherefore before we enter into the Resolution of amendment, we ought to be very careful that our Wills be thoroughly prepared for it, that they be reduced to a fair compliance with the matter we are resolved upon, and effectually dissuaded out of all Resolution to the contrary. And when this is done, we may chearfully proceed to the forming of our good Resolution; or otherwise, all is but Heat and Passion, irregular Motions of the Mind, which will never help a Man to encounter with his Lusts, nor hold out till he has reduced himself to a fair compliance with the Duties of Religion. *Secondly,*

*Secondly*, The stronger and sooner we resolve upon Amendment, the easier and less difficult will it be to tame our Passions, and extirpate our Lusts; for they are still improving, and every day get more and more strength and ground of us, which if permitted to spread and grow up, will at length become so tyrannical and tumultuous, so radicated and habitual, that we shall become Impotent, and it will be in vain to make any Sally upon them. And besides, the longer it is before we enter into Holy Resolution, the more listless and untoward we shall be to begin a Work of so much time and pains; so that, what through our faint-heartedness on the one hand, and the difficulties we must rub through on the other, before we can change our Natures, and reduce them to the evenness of Virtue, we perchance die in the interim, and are sunk by the weight of our own guilt into Eternal Misery. Therefore as



we would succeed in this great and mighty Concernment, and gain the Victory over our selves, as we would not in the latter end of our days have such a troublesome Work to begin, when we shall have the least Strength and Courage to carry it on; let us be so wise for our selves, to enter upon a serious Resolution timely, when both our Years, and the Youth of our Lusts, promise us the Victory over them. But why so much admonishment in this Case? Why such need of Argument to press to such a Temper of Mind, when our Souls lie at stake, whose Eternal Happiness or Misery depends upon our good or bad Management of them. And if we lose them, we lose our All, and no possibility of recovering them. As our Saviour says, *What can a man give in exchange for his soul?*

*Thirdly*, Consider what a comfortable Condition that Man is in, who  
by



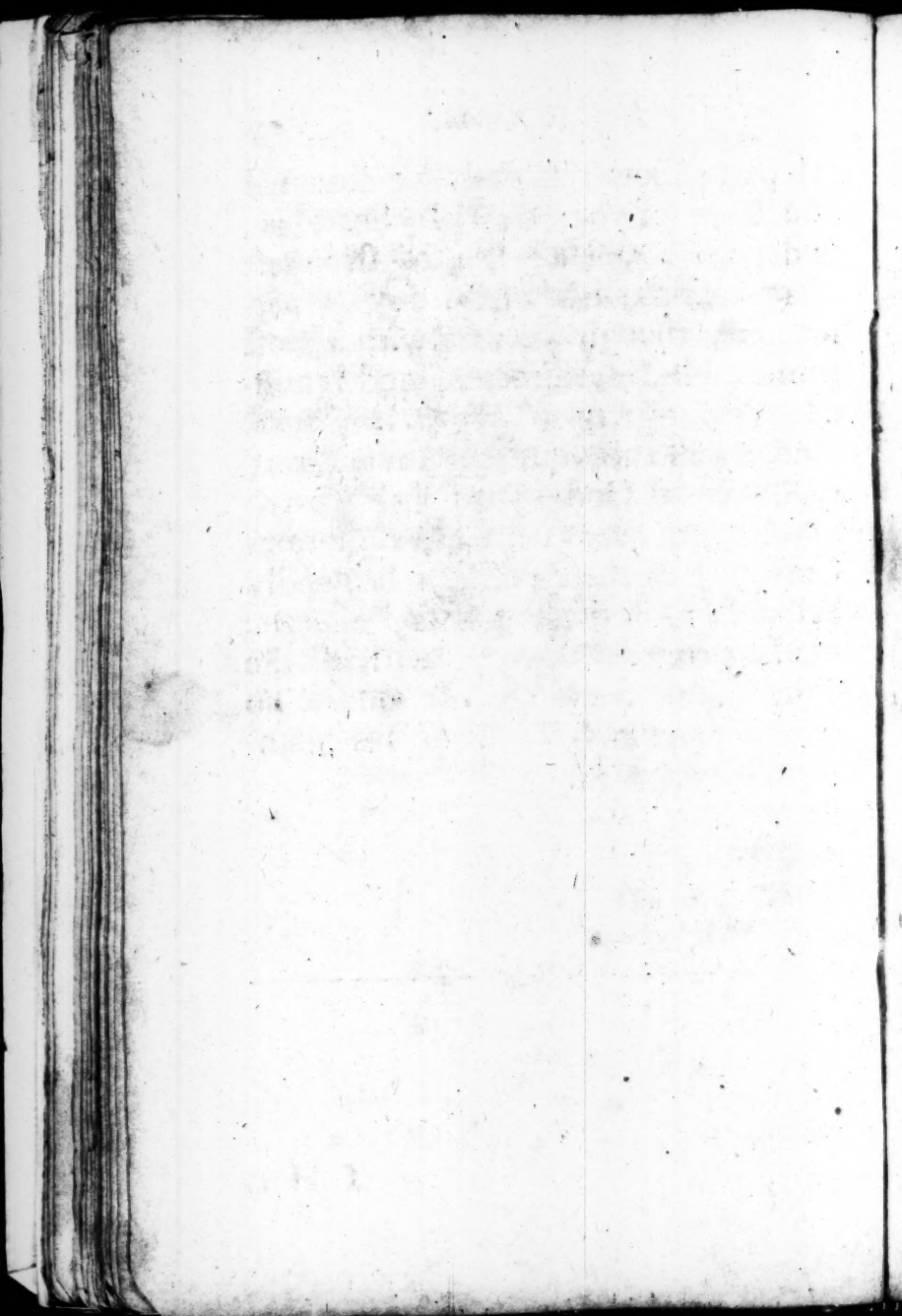
by assiduous Watchings and Strivings, Prayers and Tears, by wise Considerations, and strenuous Arguments, has subdued his Lusts, and reduced the Sensual to a fair compliance with the Rational Part; what slavery and hardship, what Perturbations and Tumultuous Noises is he freed from? Whereas he that is subservient to his irregular Appetite, is at the beck of every Motion; hurried on from one Evil to another, fatigued and worried by an injured Mind, and is never at peace from the restless Importunities of his craving Lusts. What mischiefs is he daily exposed to? And what base and unmanly Shifts is he put upon to extricate himself out of those Difficulties he involves himself? How does his Lusts perplex and intrigue the whole Course of his Life, and intangle him in a Labyrinth of knavish Tricks and Collusions? But he that by special Arts and Strengths of Mortification has gained the ascendent over

his Nature, is never thus interrupted, nor exposed to such Actions, which he shall either be ashamed to own, or care if they were manifest to the whole World. He is no longer govern'd by blind Passion, but directed by right Reason; he is not influenced by Interest or Example, unless it be warrantable, and becomes a Christian. And now upon the whole,

These things considered, I think there cannot be any thing more argumentative, nor of more force to prevail with rational Men to enter upon Holy Resolution, since it produces such happy Effects. And as it will certainly carry us safe through a troublesome and noisy World, so it qualifies us for the Enjoyments and Felicities of a far better; where we shall recount with Triumph and Glory, with what courage and bravery we acquitted our selves, how manfully we resisted the Impulses of the Natural

ral part; how resolutely we stemm'd  
the Tide of our Evil Inclinations,  
and gave a defiance to the strongest  
Temptations; how chearfully we per-  
severed, though we met with almost  
immovable Impediments, and retain-  
ed *our integrity as long as we lived.*  
And by all this, our Love and Loyalty  
shown to God; then shall we tri-  
umph for ever with the glorious  
Company of the Apostles, the goodly  
Fellowship of the Prophets, and the  
noble Army of Martyrs, with all the  
Saints and Servants of God. To  
which Happiness God of his abun-  
dant Mercy, &c.

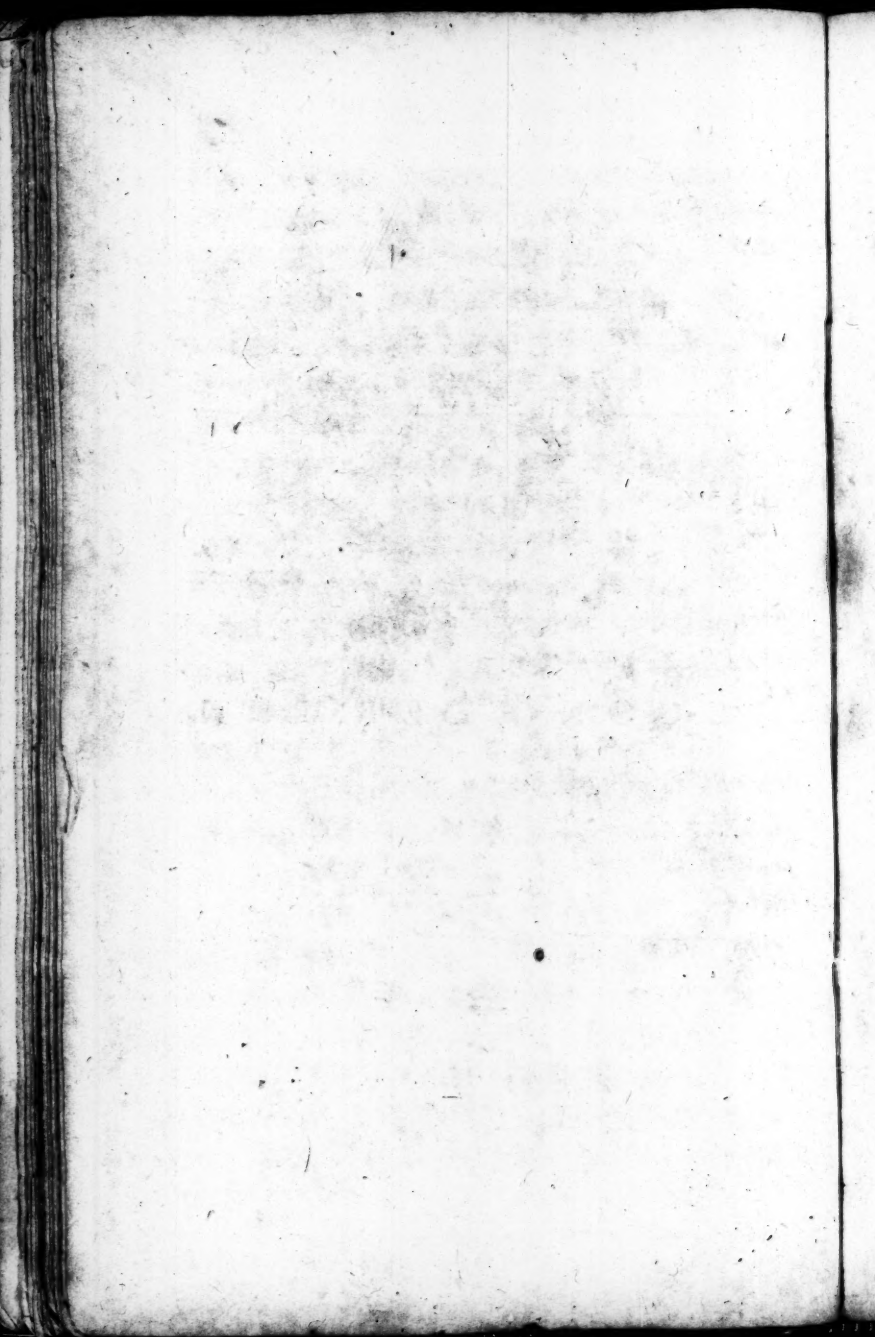
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THE  
SECOND SERMON.

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P H I L. III. 13, 14.

Brethren, I count not my self to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

**T**H E S E Words seem to be a caution given by the Apostle against the false Teachers suggestion about Perfection in this State, from the instance of himself, so eminently called to be an Ambassador for

for Christ. There were some who insinuated, That it was possible to arrive at such a Degree of Goodness in this Life, that persons might stop there, without any further improvement, and without any hazard of losing their Reward. This absurd opinion the Apostle endeavours to confute; and from himself shews, That he did not think he was so sure of the Crown, that he could not miss it. I, says he, consider not how much of my Race I have run, what Virtues I have attained, what Proficiency I have made in the Christian Warfare; my business is, while I have Life, and the use of my Faculties, to be still aiming at more eminent degrees of Perfection in Holiness. I count not my self to have apprehended, I am not so good as I may and ought to be; nor shall the time past which I have spent in gathering together the Christian  
Graces,

Graces, suffice for the time to come ; but that also shall be employed in holy Exercises , in watchings and strivings , in earnest prayers , and wise considerations ; I will still be running my Race , till I come to the very Goal ; *forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before , I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* While we are on this side the Grave , we are continually exposed to Temptations ; and by sad Experience we find , that they too often insinuate with , and prevail over us , sometimes by sudden surreption or surprize , sometimes for want of a good judgment and a sound understanding ; and sometimes for want of substantial Arguments and sutable Considerations ; so that still here is work for Repentance , and a renewed Obligation upon us , to grow stronger and stronger in the Lord,

Lord, and in the power of his might. Virtue is like unto Steel, if it be disused, will lose its lustre, and contract a rust; if those Graces we have acquired, be not exercised, and improved, they will soon faint and languish, and leave us to the mercy of every Temptation; for it is not sufficient that we are just emerged and recovered out of a sinful state, that by holy resolution, and much labour we have corrected our evil Inclinations and Appetites, and are just gotten over the line that parts a good and bad state: For besides that, the line which separates these two states of Sin and Grace is not so easily discerned, but that we may in all likelihood be deceived, and imagine that we are happily gotten over into a safe condition, while we are bordering upon the brink of our Original State, and so may at last suffer Shipwreck at the mouth of our Harbour; I  
say,

say, besides this, it is a shrewd sign that we are yet in our Sins, that we intend no further than just to preserve our selves from that everlasting ruin which awaits them; which also demonstrates, that the dread of Hell is the very Life and Soul of our Religion, and that there is not the least instance of the love and fear of God joined with it; without which, all seeming pretensions to Christianity are nothing worth. And furthermore, while we rest in such an imperfect state of Goodness, we have no security against a Relapse, but are every moment in danger of returning into our natural state. The Apostle therefore, who kept a watchful and a jealous Eye upon the inconstancy of his nature, who had well studied himself, and the accomplishments of a Christian, who knew the danger of stopping at any determinate degrees of Goodness, that while he imagined himself sure of a Crown, might by

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this

## 34      *The Second Sermon.*

this means at last fall short of it. Herein the Text modestly censures his own insufficiency, and urges, that it was not enough, that he had by watchings and strivings, by earnest prayer, and wise considerations, changed his nature, and conquer'd his passions; but that he still be improving, and aim at the farthest Degree of Perfection in Holiness. Brethren, says he, *I count not my self to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before: I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* Which words, as they lie, afford us these following Propositions:

*First*, That a Christian, while he continues in this Life, must not stop at any determinate degree in Holiness, out of a fond conceit that he is good enough already. *I count not*  
my



**The Second Sermon. 35**

*my self, says the Apostle, to have apprehended, and therefore I forget those things which are behind, and reach forth to those things which are before.*

**Secondly, That Perfection, as such, is not attainable in this Life, and therefore we ought to be as good as is possible. I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.**

**Thirdly, And Lastly, That it is very dangerous to stop in the Christian warfare, as being at leisure to listen to Temptations, and so be betrayed into our natural state. I shall Treat upon these in their order.**

**First, That a Christian, while he continues in this Life, must not stop at any determinate degree in Holiness, out of a fond conceit that he is good enough already; for Holiness**

ness is every-where in Scripture enjoined in unlimited and indefinite terms. We are commanded not only to have Grace, but to grow in it ; not only to walk in all well-pleasing to God, but to abound in so doing more and more ; that is, That we do not limit our selves to any present attainments, out of a slothful Opinion that we are Righteous enough ; but that we aim at more eminent improvements, reach after those things which are before. It is a very absurd conceit that we are good enough for Heaven, that we have done enough for the attainment of that Reward which God has promised ; that we are sufficiently qualified to dwell among Angels and Saints. For besides that such a lofty thought of one's self, argues spiritual Pride, than which nothing more obnoxious to God ; so it implies, That we conclude our labours meritorious that Heaven is not a Deed of Gift  
but

but our proper right ; not a Reward of free mercy , but our just and undeniable claim. Should we but recollect what imperfections are mingled with the best of our Services, how far we fall short of perfect unfinning Obedience , how often we stain our Innocence, and make work for our Repentance, what strong contentions there are between Flesh and Spirit , between our bad Inclinations, and our pious Resolutions ; and how often it is , that sometimes through natural infirmity , and sometimes by our own consent , we are betrayed, and overcome ; I say , did we but consider how many indecencies we are guilty of, and what a mixture of evils there is in the best of our performances , this were enough to put us out of conceit with our own Goodness , and to quicken and spur us on to rectify the disorders of our nature , and to advance yet more and more in the ways of Holiness ;

## 38 The Second Sermon:

and even when we have done all, as our Saviour expressees it, we must say, that *we are unprofitable Servants*, we have done that which was but our duty to do; for alas! God does not exact duty from us because he needs it, because he is the better for it. For (besides that he cannot want any thing without himself, that he cannot any ways need mortal Breath to praise him, or hands of Flesh to serve him, who has millions of better Creatures than we, absolutely at his Devotion, and can with a word create millions of millions more fitter than we to honour him) the best estimation we can have of him is much below him; the best expression we can make, is very unworthy of him; he is infinitely excellent beyond what we can imagine or declare. It is only his pure Goodness that moves him, for our benefit and advantage, to demand it of us. He has made Obedience the condition

tion of our happiness, though the utmost we can do, falleth far short of the reward ; nor has God set any boundary to Holiness ; but enjoins, That we be always abounding in his Work. And alas ! What is Finite Service to an Infinite Recompence ? A short Life spent here in watchings and strivings, in prayers and tears, in mortification and strict discipline, to a Life in Heaven, where every Eye sparkles with joy, every Heart overflows with gladness, and every Tongue perpetually is imployed in singing the Song of *Moses* and of the Lamb, where all tears shall be wiped from our Eyes, shall move in a wide and capacious Sphere, and feed upon an Happiness, which is as large as our capacities, and as lasting as our beings. Can we be good enough to dwell for ever with a God, *with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning* ? is the farthestmost degree of all possible Perfection in Holiness, to

be compared with that purity which admits of no abatements? Should he strictly observe the indecencies which are in the best of our performances, or those petulant follies we are guilty of, when in a converted and regenerate state, they were enough by their own weight to sink us into Eternal Perdition. So that, considering how defective we are at best, there is work enough for Repentance, and for the Exercising of Christian Graces so long as we live. It is not such an easy thing to change an evil mind, to correct a rude nature, and to defend our selves against a Relapse; for this it seems is our unhappiness, *the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, so that we cannot do the things that we would,* Galat. 5. 17. While we are in the body, we shall meet with difficulties and oppositions, occasioned by the Flesh warring against the Spirit, and oftentimes we are put to it to keep  
our



our integrity, and too frequently, either by surprize, or for want of a good Judgment, or substantial Arguments, and suitable Considerations, we fall, and make work for our Repentance ; and this is the business of our whole lives, to repent as soon as we have slipped, and to fortify our selves with the whole Armour of God against Temptations. But thus much for the first proposition ; namely, That a Christian, while he continues in this Life, must not stop at any determinate degree in Holiness, out of a fond conceit that he is good enough already. From this I proceed to the Second Proposition ; which is

*Secondly, That (Perfection) as such, is not attainable in this Life, and therefore we ought to strive to be as good as is possible. I count not my self, says the Apostle, to have apprehended ; but this one thing I do, for-*

## 42      *The Second Sermon.*

*forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before ; I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. To be perfect, in a strict sense, is to be free from imbecility, whether natural, or contracted ; from any blemish, or appearance of infirmity ; in fine, it implies such an advancement, which admits of no degree beyond it, when a Christian, by special arts has furnished himself with such a Complication of Graces, that he cannot err, nor be in danger of falling ; now it is impossible, while our Spirits are clogged with Flesh, and detained by the infirmities of human nature, to be thus compleat and spotless ; for even the best of men, by sad experience find how imperfect and weak they are, how apt to fall ; that to regain their innocence are forced to renew their sorrows. Accordingly we read one of the greatest*

est Proficients in the School of Christ, lamenting the corruption of his nature, *Rom. 7. 24. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Some of the Ancients call this Verse, *genitus sanctorum*, the groan, or lamentation of good Christians, who are troubled at heart, that they are so much interrupted by the importunities of the Flesh, that they cannot serve God with better attention, with that strictness of Zeal, and ardency of Affection, they would. For what through the prevalency of the Flesh, and the subtle, but almost inconceivable insinuations of the common Adversary, they are sometimes indifferent to holy duties, disturbed by a multitude of unbecoming thoughts when engaged in them; send up their prayers with cold desires, are more insensible of their spiritual wants, are sometimes more inclinable to comply with a temptation, and are at  
a loss

## 44      *The Second Sermon.*

a loss for Arguments to preserve their innocence; these unhappineſſes, and many more, too tedious to inſert, attending the beſt of men, are as ſo many incentives to Repentance, to quicken and ſpur them on in watchings and ſtrivings; theſe oblige them to keep a jealous Eye upon the inſtancy of their nature, and to be ſtill furniſhing themſelves with wiſe conſiderations, that they may regulate their infirmities, and reduce themſelves to a better compliance with the duties of Religion. The condition of nature is ſuch, that as long as we are in the World, we ſhall be courted by temptations to loſe our innocence; and though we have by hearty endeavours ſtemmed the Tyde of our evil inclinations, and made our Wills corrective and governable, ſo that temptations are not ſo taking, nor we in ſuch manifeſt danger of being deluded by them; yet oftentimes on a ſudden, not being  
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immediately upon our guard, we are insensibly betrayed, and make fresh work for our Repentance. *Peter* little thought when he told our Saviour, that *he would die with him before he would deny him*, that ever he should have been guilty of such a disingenuous act; yet no sooner was he put to proof, but he degenerated from his so solemn a promise; and accordingly we read him a weeping for what he had done, nay, bitterly, that he who was such an eminent Apostle, had made so great a progress in holy Discipline, should stain his innocence, and lose his peace. In fine, while Flesh and Spirit are joined together, there will be contention and war, and during that, it is impossible to be void of weaknesses and infirmities. Says *St. Paul*, *here we see as through a glass darkly, here we know but in part*; in this Life, at best, we are frail defective Creatures; but in another World we shall

we shall see more clearly ; there the infirmities of humane nature will be done away, all temptation to sin shall cease, nothing shall interrupt us in our devotion, nor call us off from our enjoyments : then the tempter, who now has permission to use arguments, and lay his baits, shall be confined in the Prison of Hell for ever, and shall never betray or hurt us more. But while we are in this state, through the interruption of the flesh, we are mainly hindered, so that we cannot do the things which we would. And in regard that such is our unhappiness, we must not limit our selves to any present attainments, stop at any determinate degree in Holiness, out of a fond conceit, that we are good enough already, but follow the Apostle's example, who thus speaks of himself ; *I count not my self to have apprehended ; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which*



*The Second Sermon.* 47

*which are before : I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. But I hasten to the Third and Last Proposition, (viz.)*

*Thirdly*, That it is dangerous to make a stop in the Christian warfare, out of a fond conceit that we are good enough already, as being at leisure to listen to Temptations, and so be betrayed into our first and natural State. For as it argues the being weary of well-doing, that we begin to be cloyed with Virtue and strict Discipline, are tired out by Watchings and Strivings, when we thus slacken our pace in the Christian warfare, and only entertain our selves with the consideration how much of our race we have run, and are contented with what we have already done ; so we give the fairest advantage imaginable for Temptations to insinuate with, and the Devil to exercise his Arts upon

upon us. A Self-conceited Christian is a fair invitation to him ; nor can he have a better prospect of success, than when he finds a Man puffed up with an over-weaning Confidence of his own strength. For then sometimes he works upon him by a sudden surreption or surprize, as being not thoughtfully disposed, nor in a watchful posture ; sometimes again he insinuates with, and prevails upon him, he not having his Mind furnished with wise Considerations. He that once begins to abate his Endeavours, to disuse that strict discipline he was wont to exercise himself under, to admit of larger allowances, and to limit himself to present attainments, will go back much faster than ever he went forward ; for those Vertues he has acquired, being not constantly exercised, will by degrees grow weak and faint, and at length terminate into final Apostacy. And besides this, it is just with God to suffer such a  
one

one finally to miscarry, who has been so long taking Heaven by storm and violence, has broken through so many oppositions to come at it, and in despite of all the darts of temptation from without, and of all the weights and pressures of inclination from within, was gotten up as it were to the top of the Scaling-Ladder, had laid his hands on the Battlements of Heaven, and was ready to leap in, and take possession of the joys of it; and at last slackens his hold, abates his industry, and sits down secure and careless; I say, it is just with God to permit such a one to fall, and that finally: That after the blessed Spirit has cultivated his Nature, and planted it with Vertues, he unravels his Workmanship, and turns his growing *Sharon* into a barren Wilderness. Thus we see how dangerous it is to stop at any determinate degree in goodness, out of a fond conceit that we are good  
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50      *The Second Sermon.*

enough already, that we are liable to relapse into our former state, and shall plunge our selves into a miserable condition. The Apostle therefore wisely considered this, and resolved to 'be still advancing more and more in the Christian Warfare. *I count not my self*, says he, *to have apprehended*, or either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that, for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus; *forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before: I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

I now proceed to draw some useful and practical Inferences from what hath been said, and so conclude. And here,

*First,*

*First*, If this Life be a time of Trial and probation, wherein God has appointed much work to be finished by us; let us forthwith set our selves about it, especially considering how uncertain our stay is here. Let us never abate our endeavours, nor slacken our diligence out of a fond conceit that we are good enough already, lest we finally miscarry. It is not enough that we correct the indecencies of our natures, and stem the Tide of our evil inclinations; that we forsake our Sins, and hate them; but that we also attain all the Christian Vertues and Graces, and these to grow and flourish, by exercising them about their proper Object, even God. Now this is not a fatigue to be accomplished on a sudden; it is not an easy thing to make an evil mind comply with a Vertue; here must be many Strifes and

Contentions, strong Disputes, and shrewd Arguings, before our stubborn Wills can be brought to a fair compliance with a Christian Grace; and then here must be great industry used to digest it into habit and Custom, or otherwise it is sooner lost, than it was gained. And then, considering the many Temptations from without us, which are continually interrupting us by their restless importunities, it is very difficult to retain a Vertue, after a long and tedious pursuit after it; and the case being so, this will keep us for ever sufficiently Employed, and oblige us to Eternity to be still aspiring beyond our present Attainments.

*Secondly*, Nor is there the want of Encouragement, to spur us on in the Christian Warfare. The Reward far exceeds our Labour, will



*The Second Sermon.*

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will make us amends for the very worst we can undergo. What is it to spend a few days or years in striving and contending with our inclinations; in Consideration and Watchfulness, in Earnest Prayer and Severe Reflections on our selves, when we are assured before-hand, that at the End of this short conflict, we shall be carried off by Angels in Triumph into Heaven, and there receive from the Captain of our Salvation, a Crown of Everlasting Joys and Pleasures; when after a few moments Pains and Labour, we shall live Millions of most happy Ages, in the ravishing fruition of a boundless Good? I say, Who that considers what great things God has prepared for them that love him, would boggle at the difficulties in the Christian Warfare? Is it not a ravishing Con-

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## 54      *The Second Sermon.*

temptation to think, that the time is coming, when we shall bathe our dilated Faculties in an overflowing River of Pleasures, and feed upon an Happiness which is as large as our Capacities, and as lasting as our Beings!

*Let us therefore run with Patience the Race that is set before us. And may the God of Peace which brought again from the Dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the Everlasting Covenant make you perfect in every good Work, to do his Will, Working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

To whom, with the Father  
and Ever Blessed Spirit, be gl  
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*The Second Sermon.* 55

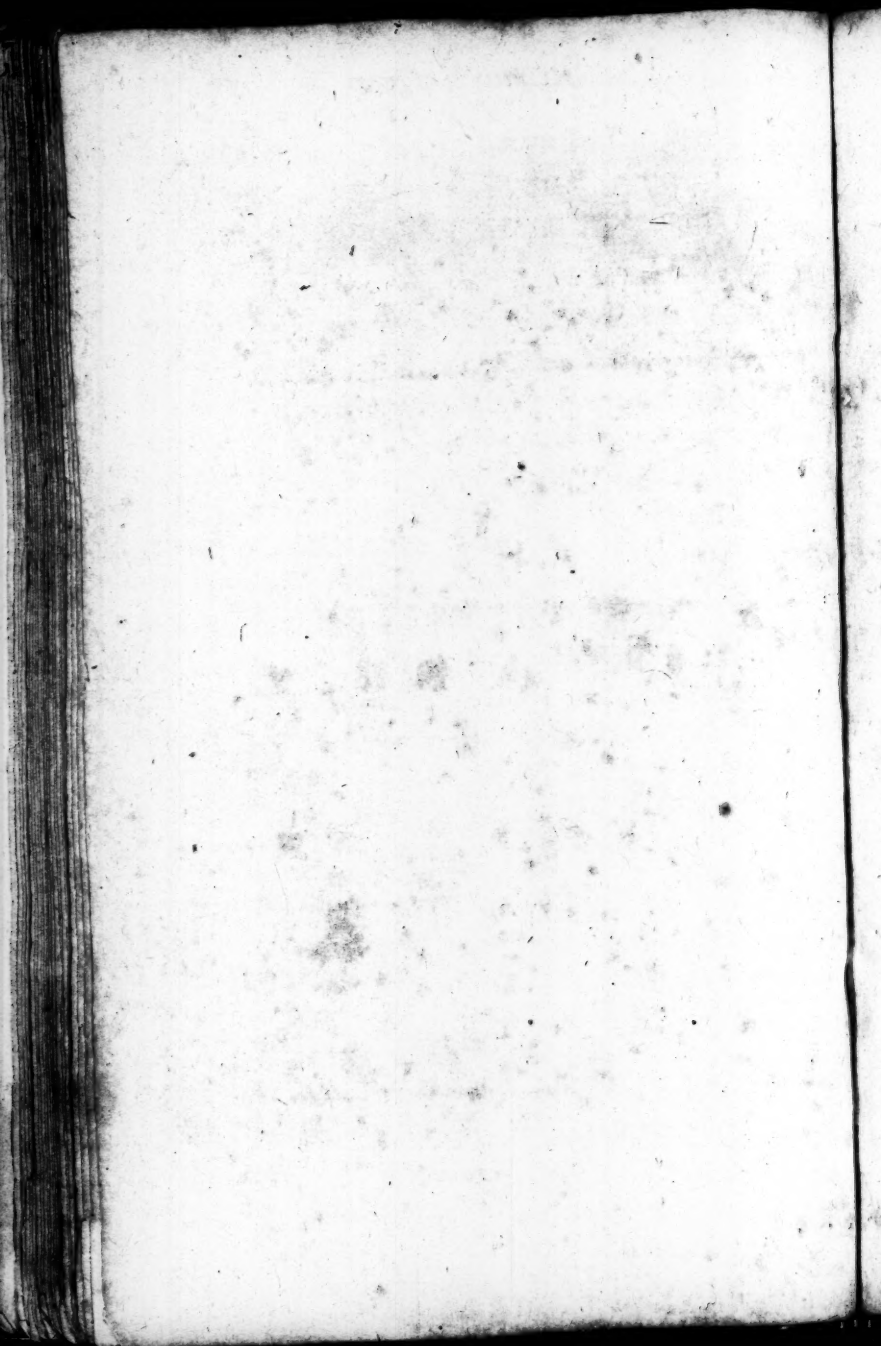
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giving, and Obedience, now,  
henceforth, and for Evermore.  
*Amen.*

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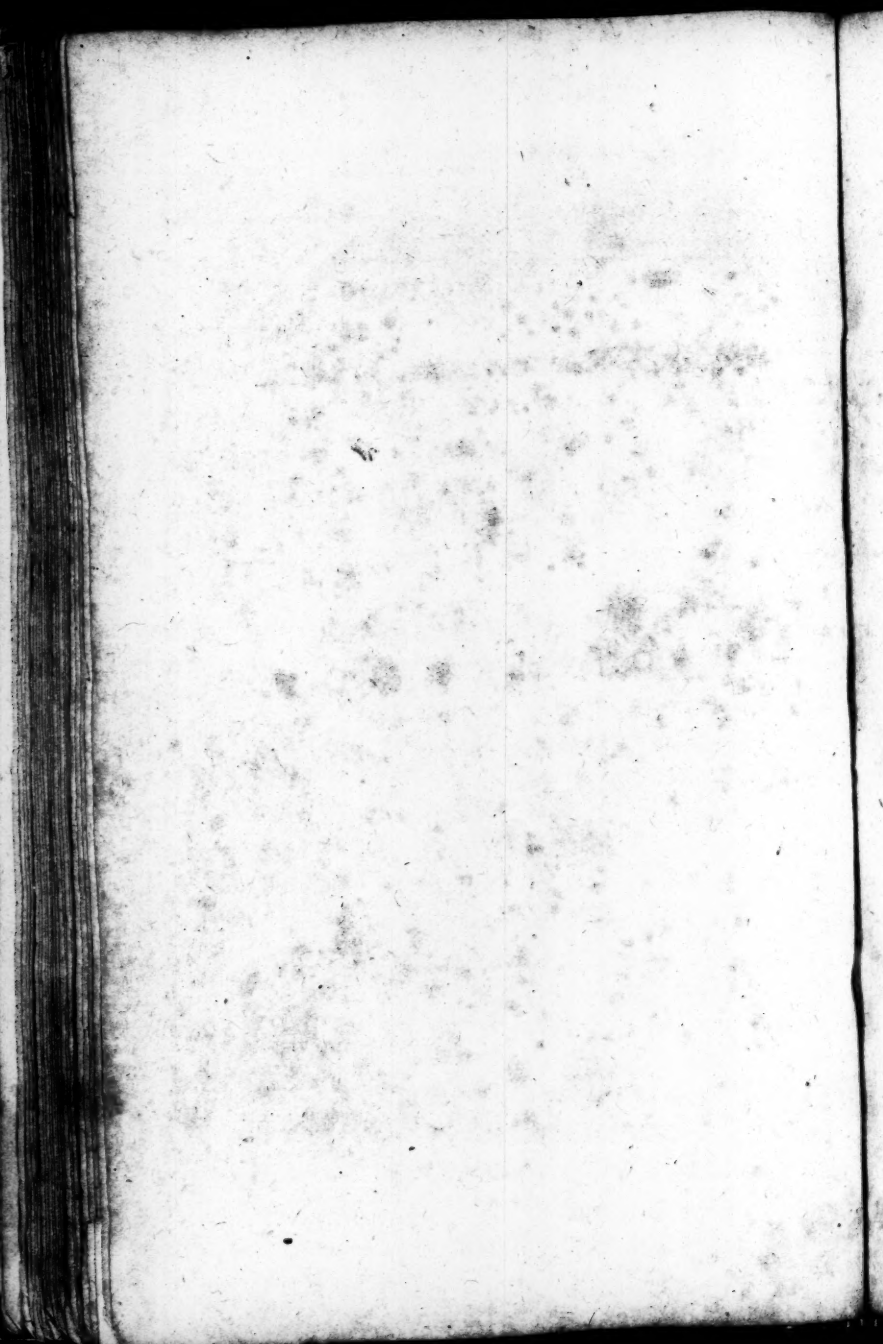
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THE  
THIRD SERMON.

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Prov.XIV. Latter part of the 32d verse.

*But the Righteous hath hope in  
his Death.*

**B**ESIDES the many Blessings which Religion Intitles a good Christian to, while he continues in this Life, such as God's special Favour and Protection, Success to his Endeavours, a reputable Name, and such like; there is yet one eminent advantage which it produces at the last gasp, as our Wise man observes in the Text; and that is, a solid Hope and Confidence of an Inheritance with the Saints in Light, an assurance of going

going to God, and living with him to all Eternity. This was it which solaced the Apostle *St. Paul* when under the apprehension of an approaching and cruel Death, *2 Ep. Tim. 4. 6. I am now ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand; but still this is my Comfort, my Life hath been spent in God's Service; I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; and therefore I rest in this, that henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the Righteous Judge will bestow upon me, when he comes in the last Day, to dispense his Rewards and Punishments. It is a sweet Reflection to a good man, when he is packing up for Eternity, that he made it his care and business to dress his Soul for the embraces of the Father of Spirits; to think that he shall bathe his dilated*

lated Faculties in an overflowing River of Pleasures, and feed upon an Happiness which is as large as his Capacity, and as lasting as his Being; to think that as soon as his Soul is stormed out of the outworks of Nature, the Angels, which are ministring Spirits, will convey it into *Abraham's* Bosom; I say, such a thought as this upon a Death-bed, mitigates the Ragings of an imperious Disease, sweetens the bitter Cup, and renders the approaches of Death less formidable and scaring. Whereas, when a Wicked man, after repeated Provocations, and wilful resistings of Divine Grace, is flung by an invisible hand upon his Sick or Death-bed; he is presently Arraigned by his injured Conscience, and a large Catalogue of all his Sins is opened and read before him; he is afraid to Dye, because he  
has

has all along lived in Rebellion against God. And here we may imagine what a surprize the Wretch is in, to think, that he must live out a long Eternity in unpitiable Sighs and Groans, and endure the Vengeance of an irreconcilable God; that no sooner will Death cut the Thread of Life; but he enters into a World of despairing Ghosts; and that at the Day of Judgment, must change his unhappy condition for a much worse; these are the Thoughts which usually attend ungodly men, when they are making their Exit, unless they are hardened, or deprived of their senses through the Violence of their Distemper. This is the last punishment of a vicious course in this Life: And one would think, that such an uncouth remembrance of things, at such a time when a man is under the ill circumstance of an in-

*The Third Sermon.* 63

intolerable Distemper, when Nature is almost spent, the Eyes darkned like a sullied Mirror, the Face besmeared with a clammy sweat, the whole Body trembling under the Severity of death, when the Soul, as it were, sets hovering upon the Lip, just advancing upon the Shoar of another invisible World; I say, one would think, that it were enough to make men afraid of Sin, to be thus miserably tormented with the Reflections of it, when they are stepping out of this, into a wide World of Spirits, where their sorrows will be Augmented, and the remembrance how they have lived here will afflict them more, than to be stung with Snakes, whipt with Scorpions, and all the Instruments of torture applied unto them. And it is no less a prevalent Motive to the Study and Practice of Religion, that it influences

fluences a man to generous Actions, and to order his Conversation so, that he shall not be ashamed, nor afraid to look back upon the passages of his Life past, when he comes to dye; but revive his drooping Spirits with the Hope and Assurance of commencing a Happy and Joyful Eternity; having in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly Wisdom, but by the Grace of God, had his Conversation in the World. And so says *Solomon* in the Text, *The righteous hath hope in his death*; the consideration of his well-spent Life, lifts him up at the last gasp with the confidence of living with God, Angels, and Saints. Which words manifestly imply this Proposition (*viz*) That a truly pious and holy Life, produces a happy and comfortable Death.

Now



*The Third Sermon.* 65

Now my Business shall be,

*First*, To prove the Truth of this.  
Then,

*Secondly*, To persuade Men to the Practice of Religion, from the consideration, that it brings Peace at the last; and qualifies their Souls for the Embraces of the Father of Spirits.

*First* then, I am to prove the Truth of this (*viz.*) That a truly Pious and Holy Life produces a Happy and Comfortable Death; which is the same in sense and meaning with what the Wise-man asserts in the Text, *That the Righteous hath hope in his Death*; as if he had said, That man that Exercises himself daily to have a Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards man; who by Study and special Arts hath contracted an intire love to God and Religion, and lives in a constant and unfeigned Obedience to the Institutions

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tutions of the Gospel, shall be so far from having any frightful Reflection upon what is past, or dismal Prospect of what is to come, at the time of his Death, that the very consideration of his sincerity in the Practice of Religion, will revive and cheer his drooping Spirit, with the Hope and Assurance of a joyful Resurrection to Eternal Life, through the Merits and Satisfaction of Jesus Christ; by the imputation of whose Righteousness, he shall be enabled to stand blameless before God. How true this is, our own Experience and Observation tells us. When we have visited a Friend, Neighbour, or Relation, who have had their Conversation here in simplicity and godly sincerity, with what cheerfulness have they resigned to God's Will and Disposal? How little have they been concerned at the Thoughts of approaching Death? With what Comfort and Satisfaction have they looked back upon, and remembered the general

ral course of their Actions? How have they rejoiced in the Testimony of a good Conscience? How light and easy did the Yokes of Pain and Sicknes set upon them, being taken up with the Thoughts of a future happy Life, and Established with the assurance of Reigning the Lives of Victorious Saints? What Lectures of Admonishment have they delivered to their surviving Acquaintances, that they would live in the fear of God, and dedicate their days to his Service, for that such a Conversation only will bring them peace at the last? With what Courage did they meet the King of Terrors? How familiar and comfortable were his approaches to them, having the same mind which was in the Apostle, *desirous to be dissolved, being confident of spending an Eternity with Christ*, whose Vertues they endeavoured to imitate, and whose Example they made the Pattern and Model of their Actions? This is the comforta-

68      *The Third Sermon.*

ble State and Condition of good Christians, when lying under the unhappy circumstances of Mortal Pains or Sicknesſes ; neither the inconvenience of a crazy and diſtempered Body, nor the fear of Death, nor all the diſturbances which uſually attend a death-bed, can ſhake their Faith, or remove their Hope of a bleſſed Immortality. For the very Deſign and Purpoſe of Religion is, To teach men how to dreſs their Souls for the embraces of the Father of Spirits, to furniſh them with ſuch neceſſary Graces , as may prepare them to ſtand before the Son of Man when he comes to Judgment ; and he that is endued with this holy Principle, and by Practice hath digeſted it into habit, has answered the great end of his being ſent into the World, and is fortified with conſiderations ſufficient againſt the worſt that may happen to him. Of ſuch an excellent and gracious Nature is Religion , that it qualifies a man for all  
ſtates

states and conditions of Life ; if he be Rich, it instructs him to set loose in his Affections to the Goods and Affluences of this World ; not to prefer the Creature to, or bring it in competition with the Creator ; but to use this World, as not abusing it, moderately embracing sublunary Blessings ; with a generous Resignation of mind to leave them without murmuring, if Providence so ordains it, either to take them from us, or we from them. In fine, Religion also learns the Man who is fortunately blessed, to be charitably disposed, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to minister to persons according to their unhappy circumstances. If a man be poor, Religion teaches him to be content with his Lot, and to submit cheerfully to him that governs the World, who knows what condition is best for us ; it learns him not to covet the Goods of another ; it being a mighty disturbance to the Tranquility of the mind,

to Desire, and not to have ; it also instructs to be honestly inclined, by abstaining from pilfering and stealing, poverty being a strong temptation thereto, without the prevention of Divine Grace. In brief, Religion prompts us to whatsoever things are honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good Report ; and he that by special arts and strengths of Mortification, has reduced his nature to the evenness of Vertue, and a good disposition, has *laid up a good foundation against the time to come.* Whenever God sends his Messenger to call him off the Stage of this World, he comforts himself as the holy Apostle did ; *The time of my departure is at hand ;* I am now ready to be stripped into a naked Spirit, and to lanch into a wide Eternity ; but this is my Consolation ; *I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, and have kept the Faith ;* upon which I ground this assurance, That when Christ, who is my Life, shall appear, I also



I also shall appear with him in Glory. Whereas, when a man, whose Life has been a perpetual course of uninterrupted iniquity, comes to dye, with what reluctancy does he submit to the Condition of Nature, and the Will of Providence? What dreadful Apprehensions is his crazy mind infested with? What Fears and Amazements does he labour under? Conscience, which before was lulled into a fatal slumber, is now awakened, and alarms him with a repetition of his wonted insolencies, and at once gives him a View of his whole Life; *These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; but I will reprove thee, and set all thy sins in order before thee.* This is but a bad Character to be given of a man by his own Spirit; and the very consideration of it must needs invade his Mind with abundance of ill-aboding Thoughts, and scaring Reflections; and the more, because he has no time to recover himself by Repentance and

a new Life ; he has neither strength nor opportunity to express such sorrow for his miscarriages, as may move an offended God to Reconciliation, but must leave this World in doubts and fears ; and , which he has too much reason to believe, must endure the despair of a damned Ghost for ever. This , I say, is the sorrowful conflict of a wicked man upon his death-bed, a sad Reflection upon what is past, and a dismal Prospect of what is to come. But it is not so with him who has ordered his Conversation aright ; he, says my Text, *has hope in his death*, that after this painful Life is ended, he shall enter into *an house not made with hands, whose builder and maker is God* ; where nothing shall interrupt or call him off from his Enjoyments ; no satiety shall render his fruition loathsome or tedious ; but shall spend a long Eternity in perfect , constant , and unmixed Happiness.

But

But thus much for the first thing ; which was , That a truly pious and holy Life, produces a happy and comfortable Death, according to the Wise-man's assertion in the Text , *The righteous has hope in his death.*

I proceed from hence to the Second thing ; which is,

*Secondly* , To persuade Men to a Holy and Religious Life, from the consideration that it brings peace at the last, and prepares our Souls for the embraces of the Father of Spirits. And here,

*First* of all ; Religion does not put a man upon any thing which he shall be ashamed of ; but as he is a rational Creature , capable of distinguishing between Good and Evil, only obliges him to such actions which he may give a good account of to his own Conscience, and to God, who is greater than his Conscience. It instructs him to chuse what is good in it self, and to reject what

what is sinfully evil. Now to be thus prudent and circumspect in matters of choice in the general course of our actions, What a comfort is it to a man, to be followed with the joyful whispers of a well-pleased mind wherever he goes; to be caressed by an innocent Conscience, and continually entertained with a sweet Reflection upon what he has done? Whereas a man of a cajative disposition, who gives Reins to his Passions, and no Bounds to his Lusts, is often put upon unmanly Prosecutions, and hurried into abundance of Inconveniences; to gratify his greedy and unsatiable Appetite, he is frequently tempted to such low-spirited actions, which he is ashamed to own, and blushes at them, though no body be privy. To how many inconveniences is a wicked man daily exposed? And what base and unmanly shifts is he put upon, to extricate himself out of those difficulties wherein he involves himself? What  
violent

violent passions and perturbations are raised in his mind? And into what wild tumults of action doth sin frequently hurry him? How doth it perplex and intrigue the whole course of his Life, and intangle him in a Labyrinth of Knavish Tricks and Collusions; so that many times he is at his wits end, and knows not which way to turn himself? These difficulties, and many more, attend a vicious and irregular course. But now, Religion only engages a man to do those things, which in their very nature contrive his good, are commendable and praiseworthy, and administer abundance of satisfaction to him when he thinks upon them; it diverts him from every transaction which confronts the Law of Reason, and would disturb his mind upon an after-thought. In fine, the very purpose and design of Religion is, to make a Man happy even in this Life, by managing his Concernments so, that he may neither be afraid or  
ashamed

ashamed to think upon what he has done at any time. And what a comfortable state is it, to be always at peace within, from the consideration of a Conversation managed with Christian prudence! To lie down and rise with a mind resounding those best and sweetest Ecchoes, *Well done, good and faithful Servant?* How bravely dost thou acquit thy self? how manfully dost thou stand to thy duty against all oppositions? And with what a gallant resolution dost thou repulse temptations that bear up against thee? This therefore I take to be one great and forcible Argument to a holy Life, That it preserves tranquility of Mind, peace of Conscience, as consisting of the best actions, and the best choice.

But, *Secondly*, As Religion conduceth to a happy Life, prolongs our days, and keeps a calm within our Breasts; so it steps in to our Assistance at the last gasp, by fortifying us against the fear and terror of death,  
and



and reviving our drooping Spirits with a solid hope and confidence of commencing a blessed Eternity. What a thought it is, when a man hath his Winding-sheet in his Eye, his last Knell in his Ear ; when he is just upon a Translation out of this, into another World, that after this sharp combat between Death and Nature is over, his Spirit will soar aloft, and feed upon the Entertainments of those blessed Regions above! That though his body shall be destroyed with Vermin, yet at the command of the great Creator shall be revived, and re-united to its proper Soul, and both live in the presence of God for ever and ever! I say, what a thought is this upon a Death-bed! How doth it relax the mind, and comfort all within a man, at such a time, who hath a hope of Heaven upon good grounds? What would not an impenitent Sinner give, when languishing, that he could but allay the Storm within, and command  
such

such a sweet Calm ! that he could chide his outrageous Conscience into silence, recover his mis-spent time, and dye with a good assurance of going to Heaven ! Some of us, probably, have visited such Wretches, who never thought of dying, till just within sight of their Graves : What lamentable moans have they made ? How miserably handled by their wronged minds ? what sighs and screeches have the remembrance of things past fetched from them ? What frightful Ideas have their disturbed Spirits presented to them ? How uneasy and restless, worried, and even confounded with despair, and left this World in unspeakable Agonies ? Now, as we would desire, when we lie under the ill circumstances of a crazy body, and a mortal distemper, to be quiet and peaceable within, and wear out our languishing hours with a good assurance of Heaven, we must endeavour to lead holy lives, which alone bringeth peace at the last.

last. But here some may say, This we know already, and there is no such need of repeating it. I confess, that I pretend not to insinuate any thing new, but only to remind men of their latter end, and of those things which belong to their present and future peace; and how necessary this is, too plainly appears by the lives and practices of many, who converse here as if they were never to dye; who instead of wiping off their guilt by a sincere Repentance, courageously press on, as if they were ambitious of being Heroes in Iniquity; they charge through all the modesty of Human nature, through all their native sense of a God and a Divine Vengeance, and offer a kind of Violence to Hell, as if they meant to force open its Brazen Portal, and enter headlong into it, before it be ready to receive them. Is it not therefore necessary to alarm such Wretches with repeated Lectures of Mortality? To remind them of Death  
and

and Judgment ; and what must be done by them , if they would dye comfortably, and behold the face of the Judge, Christ Jesus, with comfort ? But,

*Thirdly, and Lastly, Religion is an indispensable Qualification for Heaven. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Though we speak with the tongues of Men and of Angels, and have not Charity, we are but as so many sounding brasses, and tinkling cymbals. Though we have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge ; and though we have all faith, so that we could remove mountains ; Nay, though we bestow all our goods to feed the poor, and give our bodies to be burned ; yet if we are not truly Religious, possessed with the Spirit of Piety and Holiness, all this will avail us nothing, says the Apostle St. Paul, 1 Cor. 13. 1, 2, 3, &c. Were it possible for a wicked Soul to go to Heaven, it would find nothing there which would entertain it to satisfaction.*

satisfaction. For to use the expression of one, Our Souls will continue for ever what we make them in this World. Such a Temper and Disposition of Mind as a man carries with him out of this Life, he shall retain in the next : If we do not in a good degree mortify our Lusts and Passions here, Death will not kill them for us, but we shall carry them with us into the other World ; so that, I say, should God admit us so qualified into the place of Happiness, yet we shall bring that along with us which would infallibly hinder us from being happy. Thou Carnal and Sensual Wretch ! What Happiness would it be to thee to see God, and to have him always in thy View, who was never in all thy thoughts ! To be tied to live for ever in his Company, who is of a quite contrary Temper and Disposition to thy self, whose presence thou dreatest, and whom whilst thou wast in this World couldst never endure to think  
G upon !

upon! So that the pleasures of the other happy World would signify nothing to him, who is not so disposed to take pleasure in them; for the Employment of that blessed place, as it would be unsuitable, so unacceptable to a vicious and ungodly person. It is therefore the greatest and most powerful Argument imaginable to the Study and Practice of Religion, that it qualifies us for the Enjoyment of God, and renders us capable of the Employment and Conversation of Heaven; it makes us of the same Temper and Disposition with God, and the Holy Angels; And then what sweet Harmony and Communion will there be, where all are of a mind, and all seek one end! Therefore upon the whole, Let us embrace Religion as that which will fit us for the Enjoyment of the greatest Good; then when we come to dye, our Faith and Hope will become our Anchor, till both be swallowed up in Vision and Fruition.

*May*



*The Third Sermon.*

83

*May God of his abundant mercy grant, that we may so live here, that we may not fail of commencing a blessed Eternity with Them. And this for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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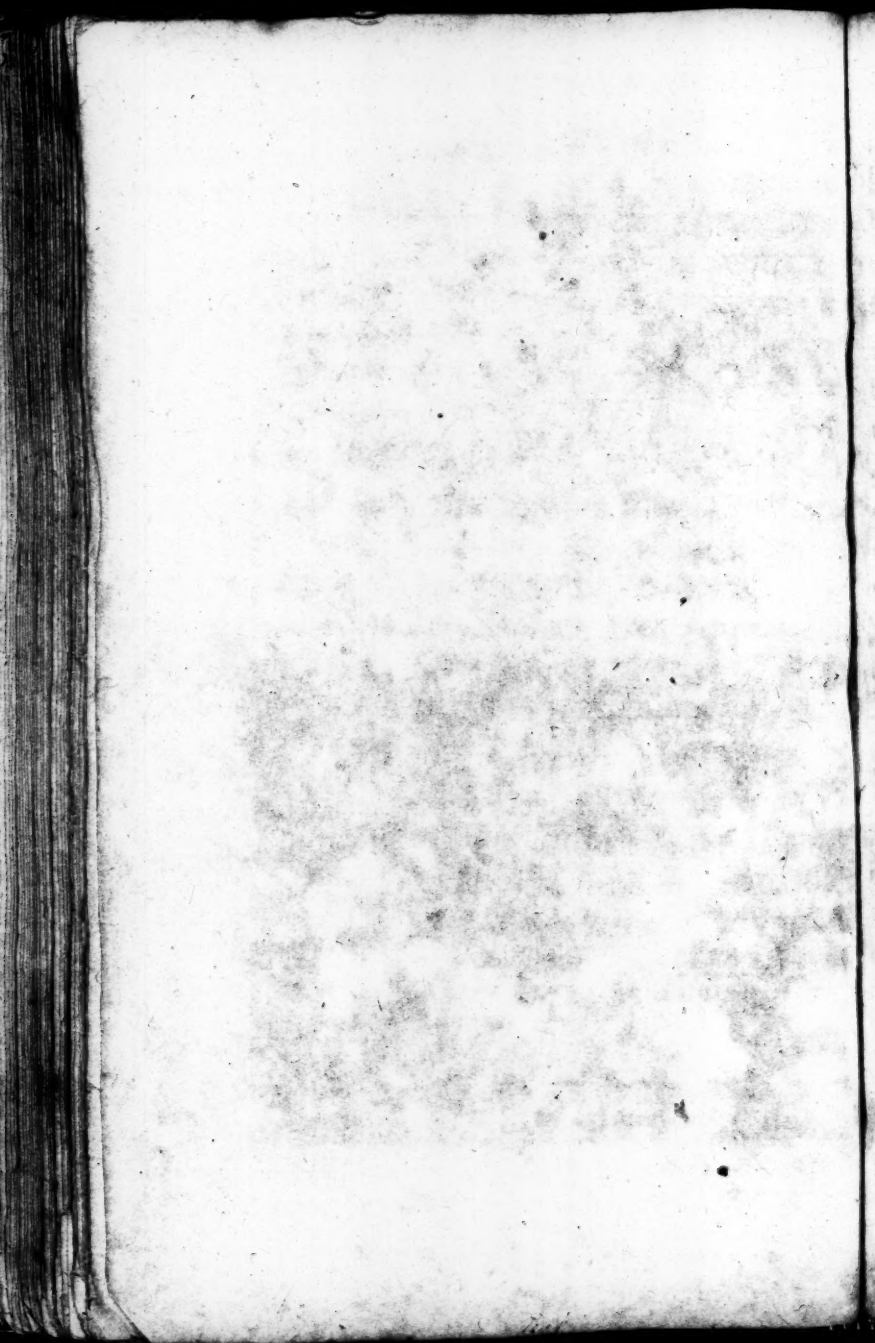


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THE  
FOURTH SERMON.

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G 3



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J A M. IV. 17th Verse.

*Therefore to him that knoweth to do  
good, and doth it not, to him it  
is sin,*

**I**N this Chapter the Apostle is inculcating many excellent duties, relating both to God and man; to God, that we express our selves unto him in all the instances of Humility, Reverence, and holy Fear; to our Neighbour, that we do not impair his Reputation, nor provoke him by slanderings and backbitings; but to do unto him as we would he should do unto us: And, as the Conclusion of this his Discourse, he reminds those to

G 4

whom

whom he writes, and by them, all Christians, how nearly it concerned them to practice what they heard and knew; and that it would enhance their guilt, and render them the more inexcusable, if they lived in the neglect of that which they knew to be their duty; *to him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin.* By which, the Apostle gives us to understand, That Sins against Knowledge induce a Crimson guilt, as being committed with Consent and Approbation. For that which maketh Sin to be so, as it stands condemned, and threatned with Eternal Punishments in the Gospel is, the doing of that which God has interdicted, which we know is in opposition to his Holiness and Purity; when our Reason forbids the action, but yet we commit it, to please a foolish Humour, to gratify a rude and ungovernable Appetite. Upon which account is that of the Psalmist, *Thou shalt be justified when thou speakest,*  
and



*and clear when thou judgest, Pl. 51. 4.* implying, That when God passes Sentence of Eternal death upon wicked men, they shall be so far from taxing him with excess of rigour, that they shall confess, to the Vindication of his Justice, and the Aggravation of their Shame, that they are deservedly punished. Sin becomes of a damning nature, because it is not only a Violation of known Commandments; but an outrage upon our Reason, and discerning Faculties, which God has endued us with, to distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad, that we may chuse the one, and refuse the other. It would indeed look more like rigour in God, should he hold us guilty for doing those things which we are ignorant are evils, though they be, and he has denounced against; because it is not, properly speaking, a Transgression against Knowledge, which extenuates the Crime, and excuses our persons. For even among  
our

90      *The Fourth Sermon.*

our selves, if one ignorantly offendeth us, is neither moved by prejudice, nor a malicious Spirit, propounds to himself neither the pleasure of revenge, nor any thing that looks like design; we cannot, unless too cholerick and unreasonable, but forgive the Delinquent, and bury the default in Oblivion. And upon this score it was, that the Apostle St. Paul quieted himself, in some measure, under the uncouth Reflection upon his former outrages against God, and the Christian Church, 1 Tim. 1. 13. *I was, says he, before, a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly.* And we read in the 19th of Deuteronomy, ver. 4, 5, 6. that God extenuates the guilt of an ignorant Murderer, by appointing him a place of refuge; *This is the case of the slayer, which shall flee thither, that he may live: who so killeth his neighbour ignorantly, whom he hated not in time past; as when a man goeth into the wood with*

with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the ax to cut down the tree, and the head slip-peth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbour, that he die; he shall flee unto one of those cities, and live: lest the avenger of the blood pursue the slayer, while his heart is hot, and overtake him, because the way is long, and slay him, whereas he was not worthy of death, in as much as he hated him not in time past. But when the evil is palpable, and the precept plain; when Reason comes in, and forbids the action; In fine, When a man is conscious that such and such a commission thwarts the Law of God, and of his own mind, and yet breaks through these Barricadoes to gratify his stubborn and inflexible will; he is without excuse, his guilt is enhanced, his presumption unpardonable without a speedy and proportionable Repentance, and will inevitably suffer the direful effects of an unappeased Vengeance.

For

For it plainly argues , that an evil is done with the consent and approbation of the will, when a man, notwithstanding his knowledge thereof, and his modest nature blushes at the sense of the Thing, and all his Superior Faculties, whereby he aptly distinguishes between Right and Wrong, step in, and forbid the action ; I say, when a man doth any evil against so much Light and Knowledge, it speaks much guilt, and matter of choice too, because he knew the Sin, and against all opposition yielded thereto. And this is it that will shame and condemn wicked men in the Day of Judgment, That they allowed themselves in the practice of those things, which , before they could commit them, were with delight fain to give their Consciences gash after gash, till by repeated blows they had rendered them callous, and past feeling : Or otherwise, it would be almost impossible that Sinners could delight in the ways

*The Fourth Sermon.* 93

ways of Death, that they could laugh and be merry while going in the broad way that leads to destruction, if they did not in the first place lull Conscience asleep, which, if permitted to speak, would make them very uneasy, interrupt their past-time, and plague them with horrid Thoughts and Reflections; hence is that of the Psalmist, *Psal. 10. 4. God is not in a wicked man's thoughts*; that is, he will not suffer himself to think of God, whom he offendeth, nor of the evil he committeth, nor of that place of torment which awaiteth him; these considerations being extinguished, render his Life much more seemingly pleasant and comfortable. But I proceed to the further Prosecution of my Text; *Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin.*

From which words, I rante these following Propositions;

*First*, That the knowledge of a sin improveth guilt, and leaveth a man without excuse.

*Secondly*,

*Secondly*, That man is set out in the World, furnished with such Faculties which are capable of distinguishing between good and evil, right and wrong; whereby he may be acquainted with the good enjoined, and the evil interdicted.

I begin with the former of these two, *viz.*

*First*, That the knowledge of a sin improveth guilt, and leaves a man without excuse; that is, to be convinced that such a thing is really an evil in it self, forbidden by God's Law, condemned by our own Reason, and threatned with Hell-fire; and notwithstanding this sensible conviction, to proceed to action, induces a crimson guilt, and renders a man, as inexcusable to his own Mind, so to God also. For what can be a greater Argument of contempt of the Discipline and Constitution of Religion, and what can express more a presumptuous will, than  
to



to do that which I am not only taught by the Word of God, and the practices of good men, is sinfully evil, but assured also by my own Conscience? And though, if we be so charitable to conjecture, that a man doth not commit a sin, because God has interdicted it, and himself disapproves of it, meaning his reason, but purely to please a fond humour, and an irregular appetite; yet this demonstrates how little regard he has to a divine precept, how light he sets by Gospel-prohibitions, thus to prefer a foolish lust before a vertue, the satisfaction of his own will before his who is to be the Judge of Quick and Dead, the Rewarder of good and bad men. And though some; the better to colour their evil disposition, and to take off the rigidness of censuring, plead natural weakness and infirmity, that though they are convinced of the evil they allow themselves in, yet they cannot withstand the temptation, and resist

resist the inticement ; yet this also explains the bent of their hearts, and the prevalency of their corrupt inclinations, and their unwillingness to oppose the violence of their uncontrollable will : for were they really concerned for their unhappiness, as they seem to be ; did they make conscience of committing of evil, as they pretend, they would study arguments, inculcate reasons, hold disputes, summon together the auxiliaries of Nature and Grace, Religion and Reason, to back them in the encounter ; they would use special arts and strengths of mortification, pray often, fast frequently, abstain from the appearance of evil ; which are the means our Saviour prescribes as proper to confront the incursions of Satan, the temptations of the world, and the lustings of the flesh ; and which the Apostle St. Paul recommends to us from his own example ; *I labour, says he, to bring my body under, that it may be obedient*  
to

*to the Spirit.* Would a man that foresees a danger approaching him, and that unless he uses some speedy prevention he will inevitably be ruined by it, stand still, and suffer the damage, when it is in his power to preserve himself? Would he not rather plod and contrive, contend with difficulties, and consult an escape, if he were in his wits? Would he suffer the Notion of natural impotency to divert him from endeavouring to eschew his Destruction? And the case is much the same; when an Evil presents it self, and the man has an aversion to it, would he not invent means to withstand its proffers? for this is Argument sufficient against it, that he hates the very thoughts of it; for thus holy *Joseph* replied, when *Potipher's* Wife importuned him to violate his Chastity with her, *how can I do this great wickedness?* It was not only the awful apprehension he had of God, which withheld him from complying with her insinuating inticements, but the abhorrence he had of the Evil it self. H And

And in this sense the Scripture understands Conversion; when a man by Consideration and Watchfulness, by earnest Prayer and Abstinence; by certain Propositions, and severe Reflections on himself, has brought things to this pass, that he not only abstains from sinful actions, but contracts an absolute hatred against them; when he hates evil for evil sake; And this, without all Controversy, is the best and surest defensive against all wicked allurements; for doubtless many, who not having strictly observed the Discipline and Constitution of Religion, that is, refrained only from the overt-act, but have maintained a love for, and a desire after some certain evils, have been betrayed and seduced to sin in the action; for outward Religion, without an inward Conversion, is not Argument enough against a Relapse, says *St. Paul*, *Rom. 2. ult.* *he's not a Jew, who is one outwardly, neither is that Circumcision which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, who*

## The Fourth Sermon. 99

is one inwardly; and Circumcision is that of the heart, and in the spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God. Hence therefore are these Precepts inculcated; *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength*; that we present our Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto God; that we be renewed in our minds; *that we put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is after the flesh; and that we put on the new, which after God is created in righteousness, and true holiness*: In fine, *That we deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*. But furthermore, there can no

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other reason be given, why a man commits an evil which he knew to be so, and which God had forbidden, but that either he resolved to come at, and enjoy the sin, though he broke through never so many Barricadoes; and this can be nothing less than a horrid contempt of the Lawgiver; or that he could not withstand the impetuoufness of his rude inclinations, nor the force of his predominant will; and this argues him of the number of those whom the Apostle speaks of, *that their consciences are seared as it were with a hot iron*. It is the determination of the Gospel that he who knows his Master's will and prepares not himself to do it, shall be far more severely punished than he who is ignorant thereof, and does not fulfil it; for this is the aggravation of his guilt, and the improvement of his crime, he knew his duty, but presumptuously neglected it. And we observe that when habitual sinners come to die if then they have any sense of the

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condition, or consider the righteousness of the Judgment to come, to which they are hastning, the accusation they then bring against themselves is, That they have committed many evils against their knowledge. They lived intemperately, accustomed themselves to swear and blaspheme, to commit adultery, to prophane the Sabbath, to injure their neighbours, and such like; these were sins they knew to be so, and that God had prohibited them upon pain of damnation; but notwithstanding this, they presumptuously allowed themselves therein. And it cannot but be a very uncouth reflection to consider, that though they knew they were in a state of damnation, yet would not retreat, but have continued therein to the last hours of their life. But enough for the proof of the first Proposition, namely, that the knowledge of a sin improveth guilt, and leaves a man without excuse, who knows to do good, and does it not; and to him it is sin.

H 3      From

From this I proceed to the second Proposition, which is,

Secondly, That Man is set out in the world, furnished with such faculties as are capable of distinguishing between good and evil, right and wrong, whereby he may be acquainted with the good enjoined, and the evil neglected; this requires no great proof, because our own experience evinces us, that we can judge and determine, and make a true discrimination between things; that we can consider and make reflections, applaud and condemn our selves, when either we have wisely done that which is good, or foolishly and unadvisedly committed that which is evil. We often perceive hopes of joy within our breasts, when we can answer our prosecutions; and are apt to blush, though no body sees, when conscience calls us to the Bar to hear our Indictment; and thus we become our own Judges, either acquit, or condemn our selves; and this, because

because we are capable of knowing good and evil, and have reason to direct us in chusing of the one, and refusing of the other, and therefore it is that we become accountable also hereafter, as the Apostle expresses it ; *We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ , to give an account for what we have done in the flesh , and to receive according to that we have done, whether it be good or bad.* And in regard that God made us rational and considering creatures, he has prescribed certain Laws to observe and keep, and by these he also intends to judge us , that is, whether we have obeyed or violated them, he having suited his Commandments to our capacities, which are able to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong. And therefore by way of exprobration, How wretchedly does Man degrade himself, while he acts in opposition to his reason, and allows himself in those things, which his own

mind disapproves of, and condemns! How inferior is he to the beasts? they act according to sense, they move in their sphere, and what they do is agreeable to their nature and being. But when Man by the order of his superior faculties is directed to good, he commits evil; as he does that which he cannot give a good account of to himself, so he acts contrary to his very nature, and the knowledge he has of things; for by the very design of his constitution, he knows what is good, and what is evil; and that the former is beneficial, and the latter hurtful unto him. And how inexcusable must he needs be, that all the injury which is done unto him, he did it himself, and was conscious thereof, when he transacted it? And this is it which will vindicate the Divine Justice in passing sentence of eternal death upon wicked men, That they are condemned for doing of evil which they knew was so in it self; and refusing of good, which they also knew

was

was really so. It generally prevents men from pitying one who wilfully and wittingly worked his own ruin, when it was in his power to have avoided the mischief; and so ungodly men shall go off unpitied in the day of Judgment, because they might have obtained mercy, but would not. It will be an ill plea in the day of Judgment to say, That we did not consider what we did; that we lived without care, without thought, without observation; for this is not an allowable plea for a reasonable creature, much less for one who knows he must be judged: for why did you live without thought, without consideration? Had you not the power of thinking, of reasoning, of considering? And did not God give these powers and faculties to you, to direct and govern your lives? Did he not make you reasonable creatures, that you might consider, and live by reason? And is it any excuse then for a reasonable creature, that he  
lived

lived and acted without reason, and a wise consideration of things? This is the great degeneracy of humane nature, the abuse and corruption of those natural powers which God has given us, the source of all the evils that are in this world, and therefore can be no excuse. And this seriously layed to heart, must needs make men have a special regard to their discerning faculties, and that since they must be judged, and that is to give a reason for what they do, to consider what reason to give, before they do it. And this leads me to draw some practical and useful inferences from what has been said, and so come to a Conclusion.

And here,

First of all, it is true, That *to him that knows to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin.* What a woful reckoning will those Wretches have, who here live without care, thought, or consideration? Who, that they may come at and enjoy their Lusts, lay aside  
their



their reason and understanding, that they may not be disturbed in their vicious enjoyments, nor plagued with uneasy reflections. What a sad consideration will it be at the hour of death, when all arguments to, and opportunities of sin cease, that they have allowed themselves in the practice of those things which they are now ashamed of, and condemn, as disagreeable to rational Creatures, and should heretofore, had they but given way, suffered their discerning faculties to have interposed, and given judgment before they had passed into action? It seems a Paradox, that man, who has a right notion of Good and Evil, that the one is profitable, and the other mischievous unto him; that he should refuse his comfort, and court his own misery, by withstanding the Good, and embracing the Evil: In fine, that he should do that which he cannot give a sufficient reason for to his own Conscience; and if it be so, How will he be able

108 *The Fourth Sermon.*

able to stand in the great Assembly of Angels and Saints, before the Judge Christ Jesus, to render a reason wherefore he so often drank to Excess, committed Adultery, prophaned God's Holy Name by Oaths, Curses, and Imprecations? Why he lived in the non-observance of his Sabbath, and offered contempt to his most righteous Laws; Why he omitted known Duties, and committed as palpable Wickednesses: In fine, Why he hated reproof, and cast God's Holy Word behind? How will Wicked men be able to stand in the Judgment and answer to these things? Sometimes Sinners are here sadly put to it to invent excuses, to inculcate arguments, and raise propositions, to extenuate their guilt, and obtain a favourable judgment; they are forced to endure many shameful retreats, false colours, and loose dawblings with untempered Mortar, to prevent contradiction and discovery: But in the day of Judgment such pleas will  
not

not be admitted, nor need they then endeavour to conceal their Villanies; for all things are *naked and open to him with whom we have to do*; he knows our *down-sitting and up-rising*, he understands all our ways; he enters every *Item* of our guilt into his Debt-book, with the purpose to bring every Evil into Judgment, whether committed publickly or privately; and this considered, What a forcible argument is it to be careful, thoughtful, and considerate, to examine wisely, to judge prudently, and to give a good reason for what we do before we commit it; in all our prosecutions, to call in the Auxiliaries of Nature and Grace, Religion and Reason; in fine, to do those things approved of by our more refined Faculties, and to omit those which they condemn? Such a wary Conversation as this, would administer much satisfaction to our Spirits, defend us from many Dangers and Mischiefs, produce a comfortable Death, and a joyful Resurrection.

Se-

*Secondly.* It is a pleasant consideration, That God has created us Rational Beings, capable of knowing Good and Evil, of contriving our safety, and shunning our destruction; What a comfortable thought is it, that we are not meer Machines, moved and actuated only by Sense, like the brute Beasts; but understanding, thinking, and considerate Creatures, that can judge of the nature of things, debate and examine, before we approve or disapprove of them! Let us then live like such, especially considering that we must give an account how we have used our Talents, what improvement we have made of our Faculties, and what we are the better for being furnished with such large capacities. They were not given us merely to be useful in our secular businesses, but to help us to the knowledge of God, of our selves, and of those things which belong to our Everlasting peace; that we may rightly understand our duty, and  
dispose

*The Fourth Sermon.*     111

dispose our selves to serve him acceptably, with reverence, and godly fear. We rather abuse our Natural Powers, when we only imploy them in plodding and contriving about worldly matters; their proper business is, to search after truth, to find out the way of the Kingdom, and to remove those impediments which retard our spiritual warfare, and hinder us from bringing our holy concernments to a happy and comfortable conclusion.

Let us then bend all our powers this way. Are we rational Creatures? Let us be able to give a good reason for a thing before we do it; this will render our Judgment hereafter more feasible, and less tremendous, when our Consciences testify that in simplicity and godly sincerity we passed the time of our sojourning here.

I conclude my Discourse with that Collect of our Church: *We beseech thee, O Lord, to grant unto us the spirit*

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rit to think, and do always such things  
as be rightful, that we who cannot do  
any thing that is good without thee,  
may by thee be enabled to live accord-  
ing to thy will, through Jesus Christ  
our Lord ;

To whom, with Thee, O Father,  
and the Ever Blessed Spirit, be  
given all Honour, Praise, Thankf-  
giving, and Obedience, now,  
henceforth, and for Evermore.

*Amen.*

FINIS



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